

International
Festival of

Arts &
Ideas

195 Church Street
12th Floor
New Haven
Connecticut 06510
USA

Committee on Appropriations
Public Hearing February 11, 2014
Testimony of Mary Lou Aleskie, Executive Director

1.888.ART.IDEA
www.artidea.org

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the appropriations committee.

My name is Mary Lou Aleskie, and as Executive Director of the International Festival of Arts & Ideas, I am here to thank the committee for its unwavering commitment to our private public partnership, and all that, together, we bring to the State of Connecticut economically, culturally, and in unparalleled national and international recognition.

At the beginning of the new year, CNN named the Festival one of the top 50 places to visit in 50 States in 2014 ranking Arts & Ideas alongside such iconic American destinations as California's Yosemite National Park as it celebrates its 150th birthday and Florida's Harry Potter World. It is with pride and gratitude that I tell you tonight of the accomplishments of the Festival that has helped to garner such national and international attention for our Festival and our State.

June 2013 attracted 139,000 visitors and returned a record 34 million dollars in economic impact to our State according to Quinnipiac University's annual independent assessment of the Festival. This 36% increase in economic impact over the previous year was the result of visitors coming from farther distances, spending record amounts when they arrive, and staying longer. Visitors came from 149 Connecticut towns, 33 US States and 11 countries with the concentration of our out of state visitors coming from the tri-state area.

This activity not only generates essential tax revenue for the state but it supported 160 jobs, provided performance opportunities for 817 artists of which 474 are Connecticut residents and required the Festival to book and pay for 541 hotel bed nights to house staff, speakers and artists. International artists participating in the Festival came from the UK, France, Poland, Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Peru, Brazil, China and India each bringing with them promotional and economic investment from their home countries in an effort to take advantage of the global visibility of their appearance at the Festival. The participation of these countries in our locally based global festival offers prime opportunities for economic trade and relationship building.

And while our Festival has each year advanced the amount of economic vitality it brings to our region each June, at least as important are the growing numbers of low to mid-income families who rely on the Festival's programs for cultural enrichment of which 85% are free to the public. Our commitment to serving all Connecticut residents remains unflinching as we continue to expand our efforts year round to enrich neighborhoods and students with fellowship opportunities, pop-up festivals, internships and youth jobs that turn the Festival into a classroom for life-long learning and a broadened view of the world.

International
Festival of

The logo for the International Festival of Arts & Ideas. It features the words "Arts & Ideas" in a stylized, bold font. The text is white and set against a dark, irregular, cloud-like background. The background has a jagged, sunburst-like edge on the left side and a small circular dot on the right side.

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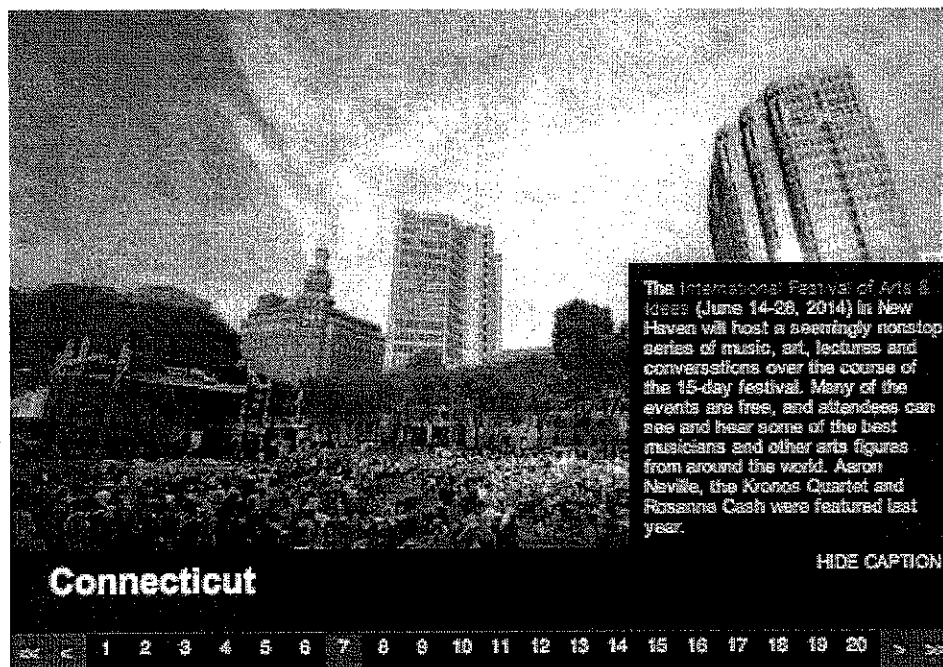
In just four months, the Festival will again take the lead on the world stage, bringing artists and audiences from around the globe to Connecticut and with them will follow an opportunity to come together in celebration, to know ourselves and the world around us just a little bit better, and to generate important investments for our region.

As you know from many years of testimony and the independent, documented studies we have provided, the Festival's annual economic impact is an outstanding return on the State's investment, and the Festival's continued existence is a joyful reminder that money spent well, returns not only tangible benefits but intangible benefits, too. The spirit of the Festival uplifts us all. With this in mind, we respectfully thank the committee for its partnership and support. The Festival, in partnership with the State of Connecticut, is an international success story. With your continued financial investment, we will remain so for many years to come.

50 states, 50 spots for 2014

By Katia Hetter, CNN

updated 10:02 AM EST, Thu January 2, 2014



STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Check out our travel suggestions for each of the 50 states
- Please add your own suggestions in the comments section below

(CNN) -- The coasts get all the glory in the United States, but there's something fun to do in each and every state. Yes, every state. Not a believer? We're going to prove it.

To welcome 2014, CNN is offering a travel suggestion for each of the 50 states. From some of the country's most glorious national parks to arts festivals and cowboy culture, we've got you covered.

Please tell us what we've missed in the comments section below. Did we completely overlook the best thing going in your neck of the woods? Set us straight with suggestions for possible inclusion in a future story.



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